

Hopewell Archeology:

The Newsletter of Hopewell Archeology in the Ohio River Valley

Volume 4, Number 1, June 2000

1. The Converse Mounds: New Research on Michigan's Greatest Hopewell Site By John R. Halsey State Archaeologist Michigan Historical Center Lansing

The Converse Mounds (20 Kt 2) lay on the west side of the Grand River in the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan. From the late 1850s to the the mid-1880s, the area containing the mounds was platted and developed. The mounds ironically bear the name of the most important early developer of this area, James W. "Deacon" Converse. During these "improvements" the mounds were leveled by construction crews, the fill was pushed into low areas, and the mounds disappeared.

Although local antiquarians undertook limited excavations in many of the mounds, no full reports survive, only partial accounts with little in the way of illustrations (e.g., Coffinberry 1962a, 1962b, 1964a, 1964b; Coffinberry and Strong 1876). Nevertheless, people were watching, and artifacts were recovered from both prehistoric burial pits and intrusive historic graves (Baxter 1891:15-18; Belknap 1922:41-45).

The most spectacular discovery was a Hopewellian burial pit trenched through by a water line on May 30, 1885. This find yielded large nuggets of copper and silver, copper panpipe jackets, copper celts, drilled effigy and true bear canines, platform pipes, and an effigy beetle done in antler. This discovery and the subsequent placement of the artifacts in Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History and Harvard's Peabody Museum preserved the raw material for subsequent analyses (Fitting 1971; Halsey 1990; Harms and Halsey 1988; and Quimby 1941a, 1941b, 1943, 1944).

The illustrations accompanying this article were scanned from photocopied reproductions of original artifact drawings, handwritten notes, and sketches. For legibility purposes, we have taken the liberty of transcribing the original handwritten notes. Care has been taken to maintain the approximate placement and size of the text relative to each drawing or sketch; however, some words could not be interpreted, and some gaps and uncertainties remain. Images are not represented at a 1:1 scale.



Found at the Converse
Mar 18 1890 Mound

Copper Needle
some corroded [sic]



Found at the junction of Watson St
between Fulton & Buterworth[sic] ___ &
now in the collection of ___ M_tages(?) Winter & Summer St West Side Grand Rapids
___ G_____ collection_ NY Mich

Following the 1885 find, there is no record of additional discoveries. The number of mounds and the exact locations of most were forgotten. The Converse Mounds became a sad archeological footnote. Our best Hopewellian site was reduced to a handful of artifacts scattered among museums. Other artifacts had vanished into private collections or even the jeweler's crucible. The 1941 "Goodall Focus" summary by George Quimby, himself a Grand Rapids native, seemed the closest thing to a "final" report there would ever be.



Mr Putnam of the Peabody
Institute paid 200 Dollars to
M^r Wetherly[sic] for
The large piece of Copper Weighing over 10

Lions tooth
2 Bear's teeth[sic]
3 Human - & part of Jaw
1 Gypsum[sic] Pipe colored by Copper Mine
The bottom portion of 2 bole(hole?) Pipe bole[sic] I have got
1 Christol[sic] Arrow head
The Huskin(g) Pins
2 large Pieces of Silver are 15 in all #
Two deer horn needles[sic]
Two decayed silver arm band (Indian).

A Chicago partie[sic] paid
a Pruser 10 Dollars for the
Copper Axe. M^r Weatherly gave
it to M^r Pruser

M^r Watson has the needles now

The rest are in posession[sic] of
the parties[sic] who found them
Porter, Done(?) & Loux(?)

As it used to be in 1853, as I remember it,
when it was worked as a farm and as viewed from
what was called the River Road, now Front St
Thos W. Porter

In addition[sic] to what is mentioned in the
printed notice of the find
1 Piece of Copper Weighing 10 Pounds And or 8^{gr} less
Than 10 Troy

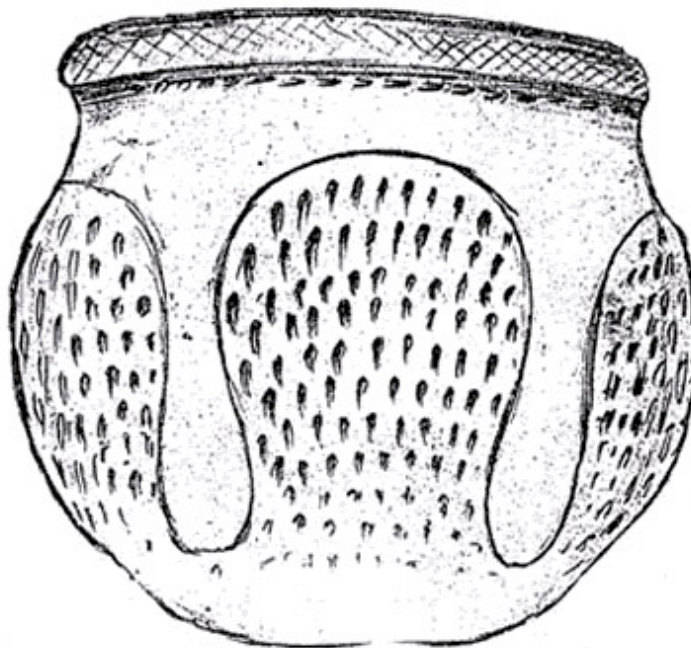
1 Lyon's[sic] tooth pierced through from both sides
2 Bear's Tooth Pine
3 Human Teeth[sic] & Part of Jaw
1 Needle made of deer bone
2 Pieces of Human bone colored by or through the action
of copper
1 Bead, Sea Shell.

1 Beadle[sic] Tater, There was 7 cranies (crania?) Taken out of mound
7 Beads 3 Diff varieties,
1 Needle[sic] 12 long
1 Bead

The situation of the find was about 1/2 way between Shanut(?) St and the
C.R.&V. Rail Road and about 3 to 4 feet West of the center of the Street now
called Court St

No. 4

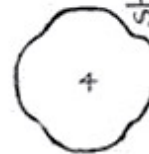
Well



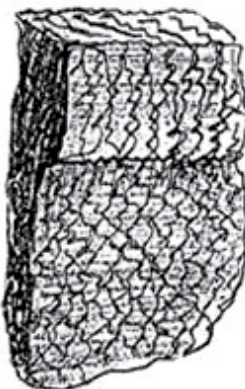
Vases found in Mound Converse
August 2 1876 (owned by Tho^s W Porter

for the Kent
Institute By
Capt. W. L. Coffinbury &
Tho^s W Porter

Shape of the (?) well of Vase No. 4



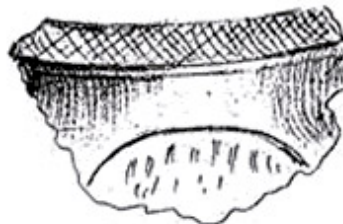
5



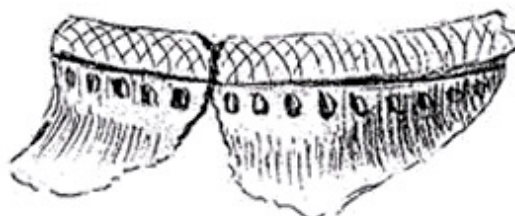
Porter

Design of Vase No. 4
a little smaller^{than} actual size

Design[sic] of a 5th Vase
Owned by Tho^s W Porter

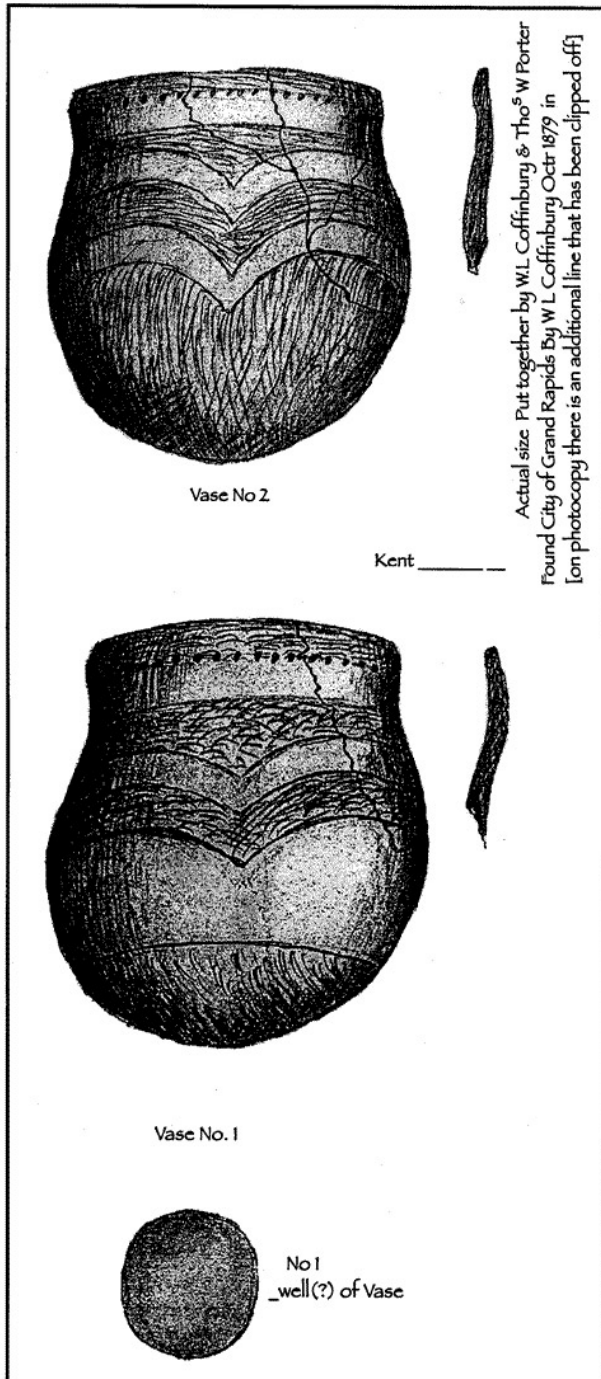


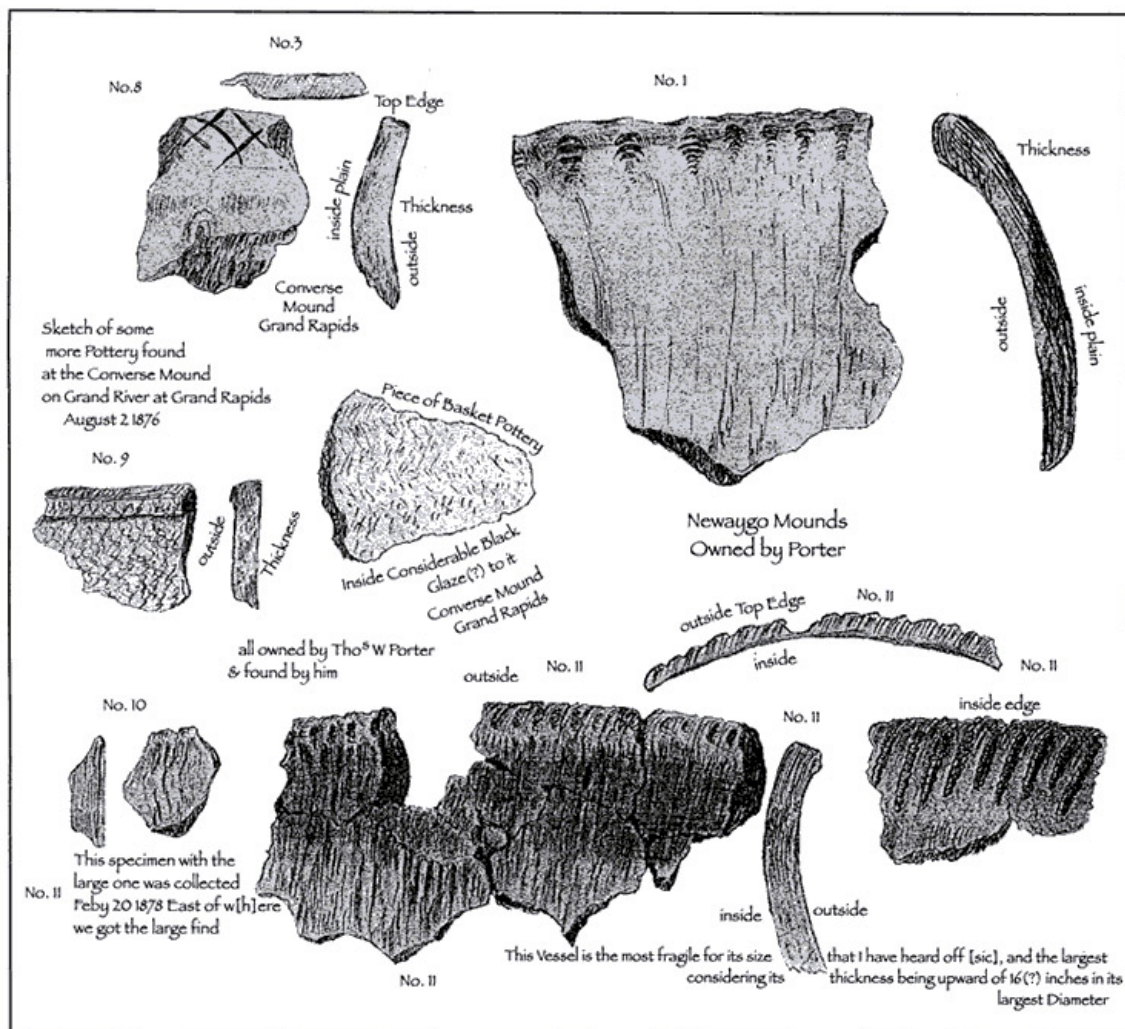
Design No. 6



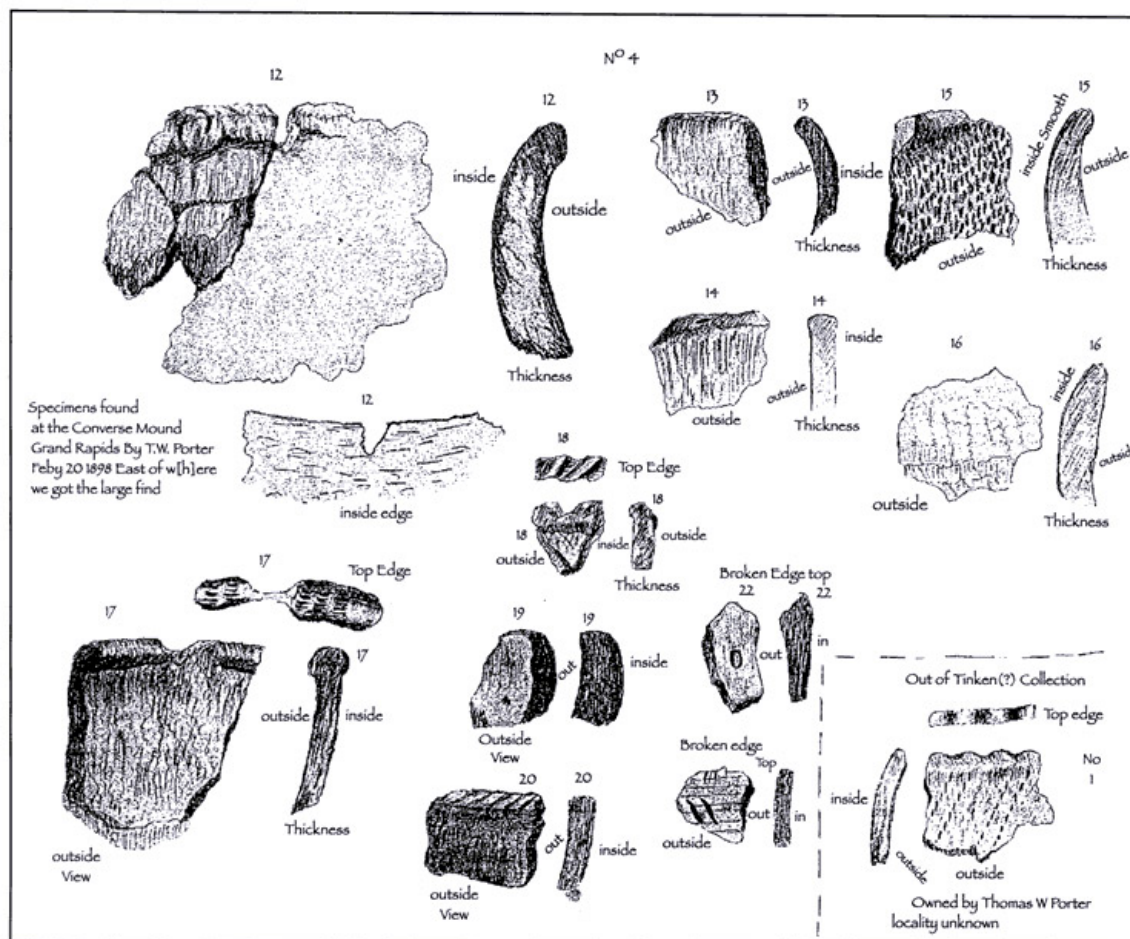
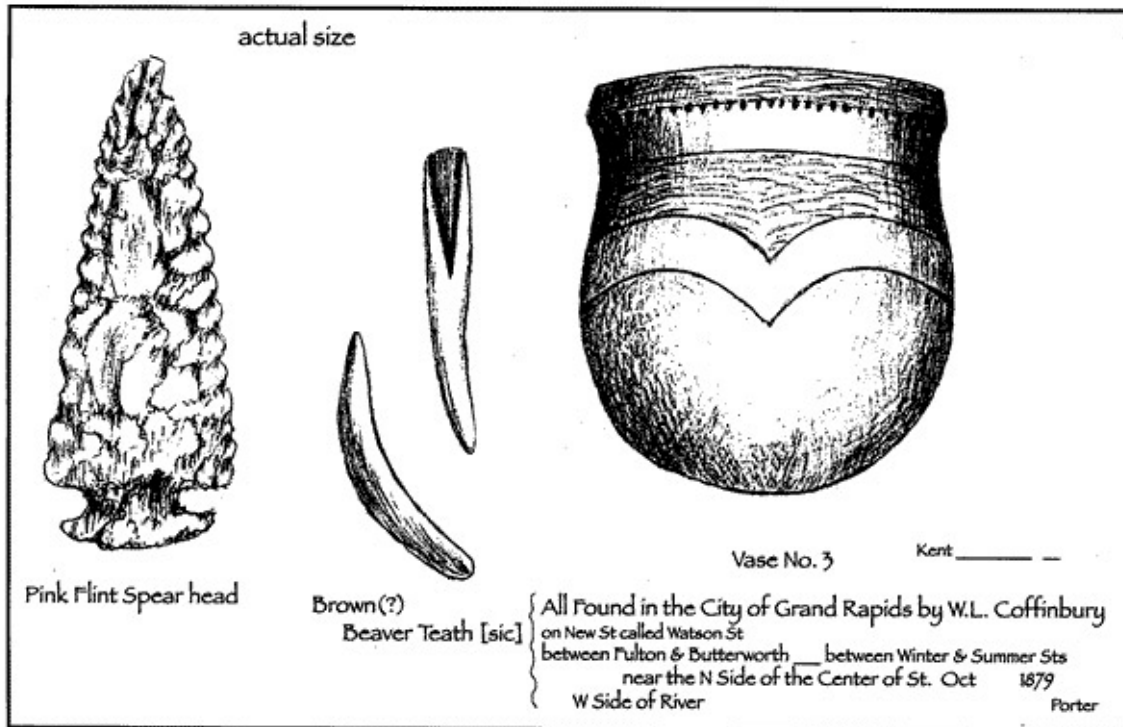
Design No. 7
Owned by Tho^s W Porter

Grand Rapids grew to be one of Michigan's largest and most important cities. The west bank of the Grand was built up, and buildings were torn down and new ones built. Ultimately, like so many American cities, Grand Rapids was divided up by high-speed, limited-access highways. One of these crossed directly over the area once occupied by the Converse Mounds. However, by 1998 it was apparent that the section of US 131 in this area was not up to contemporary design standards and required reconstruction.



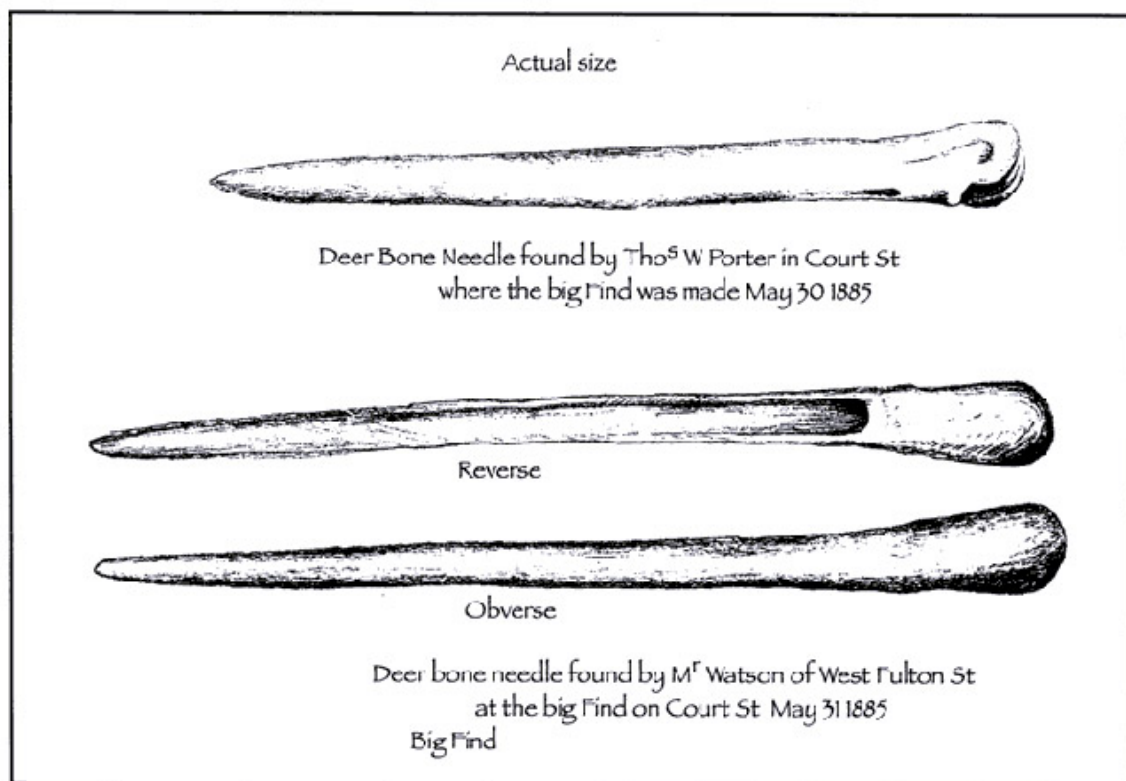


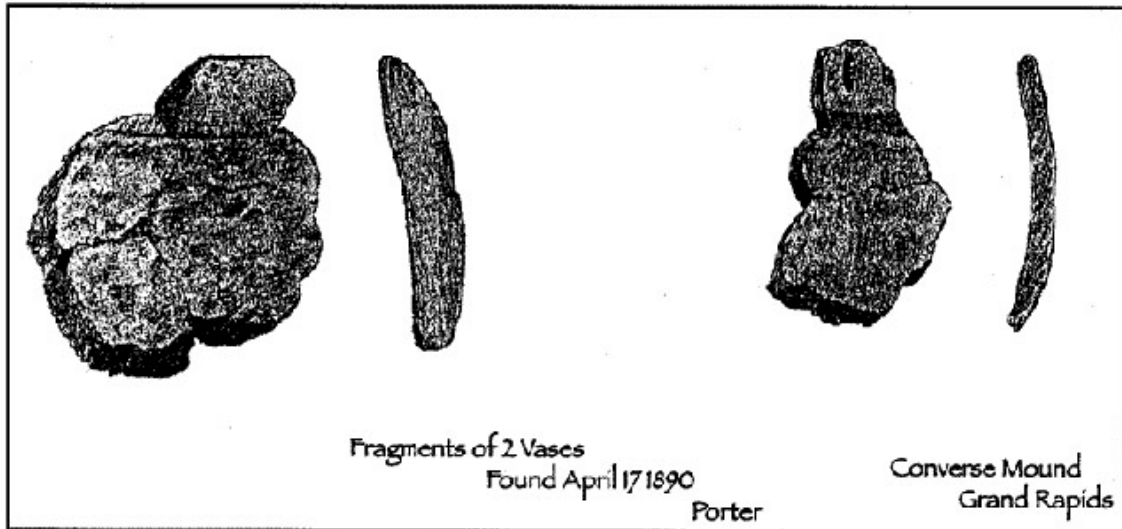
Because of the possible continued survival of subsurface burial pits and the significance of the site, it was the joint decision of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, and the Office of the State Archaeologist, Michigan Department of State (MDOS) that the time had come to reassess all available information pertinent to the locations of the individual mounds of the Converse group vis-à-vis the proposed realignment of the right-of-way. Commonwealth Cultural Resources Group (CCRG) of Jackson, Michigan, was selected to do a land-use history, a Phase I survey of the right-of-way, and a review of archival holdings in Grand Rapids.



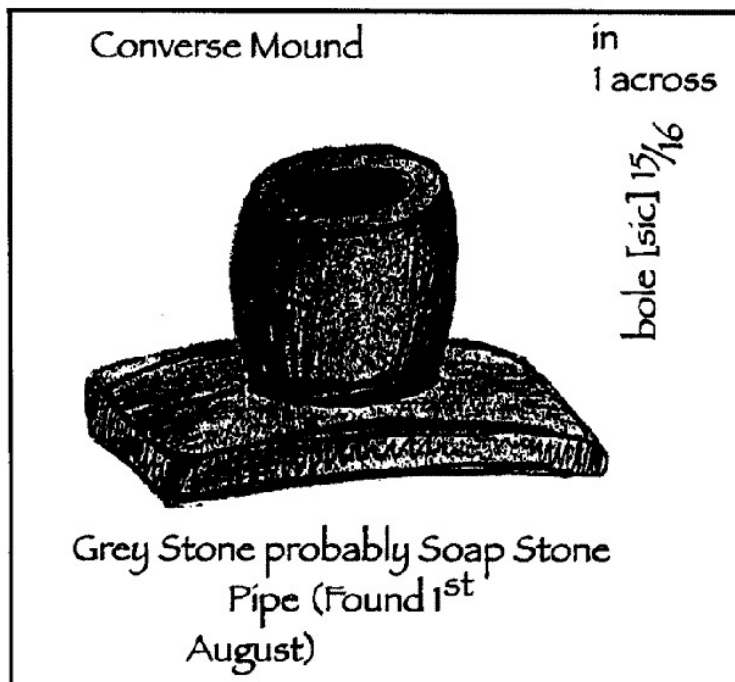
The comprehensive archival research by CCRG's C. Stephan Demeter included a review of newspaper accounts contemporaneous with the developments on the west bank, as well as the holdings of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology and the Public Museum of Grand Rapids at the Van Andel Museum Center. It also published for the first time a trove of manuscripts, maps, and artifact drawings in the Porter Collection, Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library. These documents had been created by Grand Rapids residents who had known the mounds most of their lives and were eyewitnesses to their destruction (Demeter and Robinson 1999). Although a few archeologists were aware of their existence, these documents had not previously been so thoroughly examined and compared with other documentation. Some were by Wright L. Coffinberry, Grand Rapids' best known antiquarian.

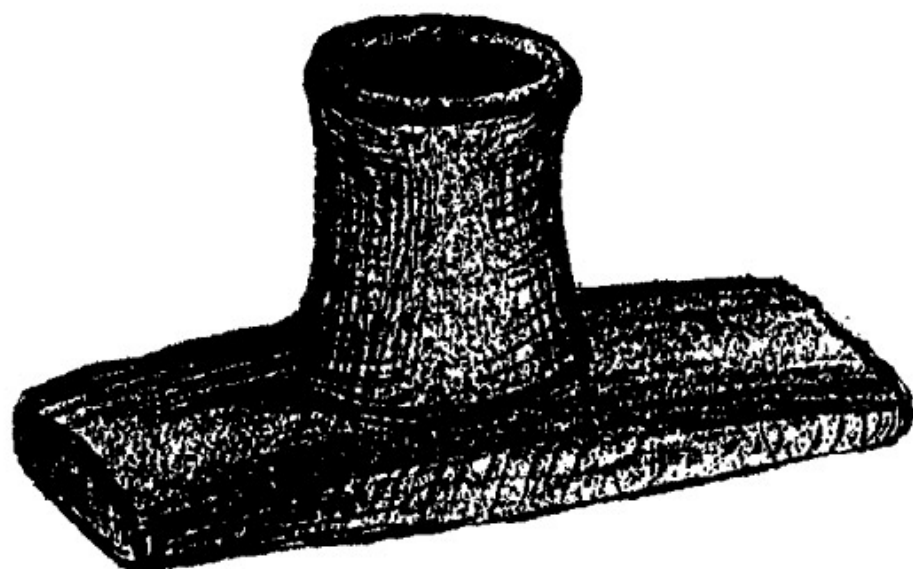
The most useful documents were pencil-drawn maps showing the mounds in 1850, another done in 1887 showing the locations of mounds in relation to local landmarks, and vertical sections through a mound at three-foot intervals. There were also pencil drawings of artifacts (many rendered 1:1), including complete and restored pottery vessels from the mounds, many accompanied by date and provenience information. These had all been done by Thomas W. Porter, a local sign painter who possessed a fair artistic talent.





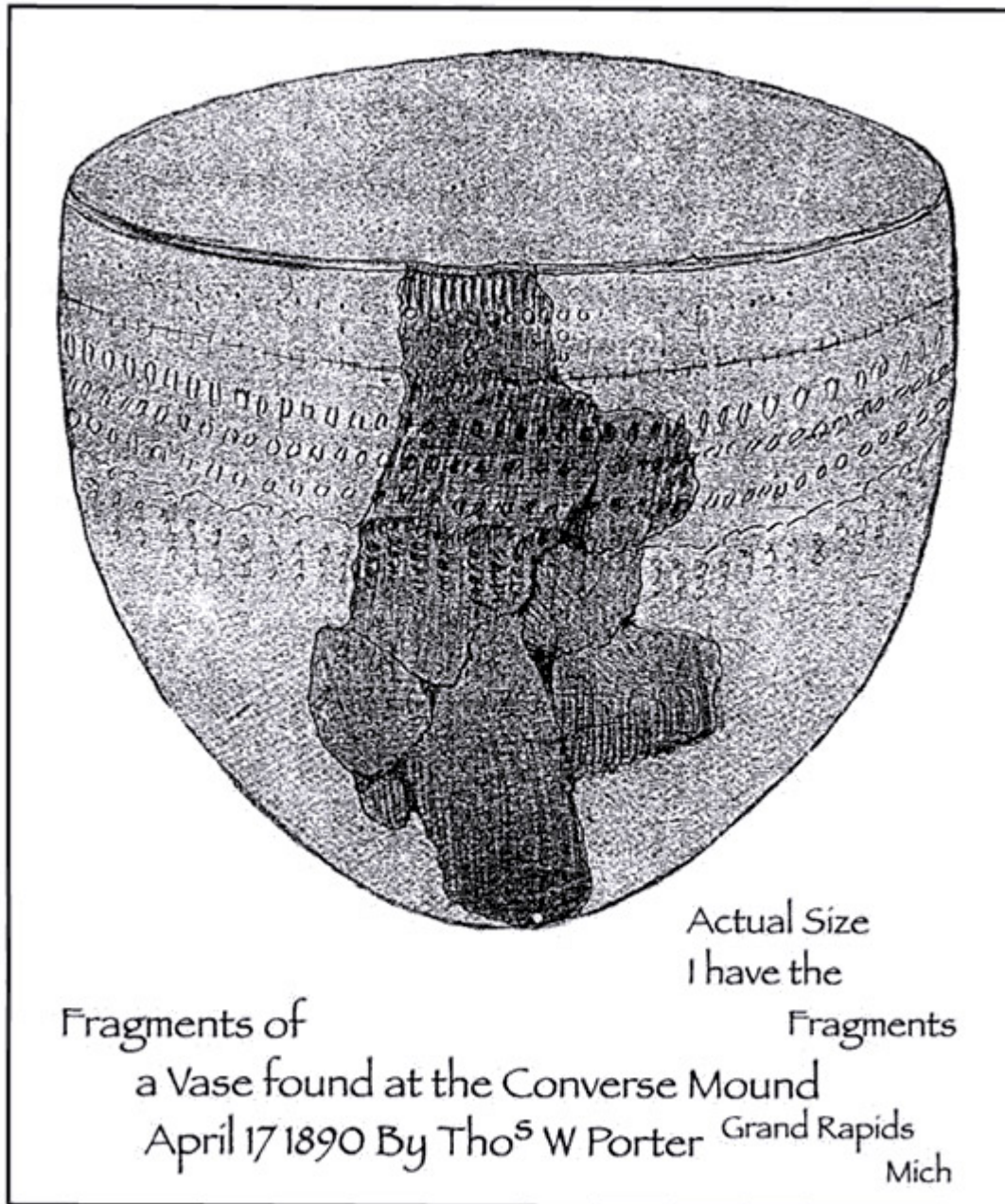
The range of ceramics from the mounds and present in the Porter drawings confirms earlier conclusions that the Converse Mounds were built in middle to late Hopewellian times, whereas the nearby Norton Mounds group (20 Kt 1) was almost exclusively early Hopewellian (Griffin et al. 1970). Porter's drawings of other sherds reveal a Late Woodland period of occupation. In addition, the mound group was also the site of a sizeable village in historic times. Demeter's research revealed a maximum total of 29 mounds, but there is a substantial margin of error in location for most of them. Initial plans for highway relocation indicate that the locations of only one or two mounds will be affected. These areas will be archeologically tested prior to construction to avoid a recurrence of the 1885 Decoration Day discovery.





Pale Red Clay or Soft stone Pipe
Found 2
August 2

Actual size
of Pipe Found in Mound August 2 1876
The Subscriber was present at
& assisted in finding of these specimens
Tho^s W Porter



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1941b Hopewellian Pottery Types in Michigan.
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1944 Some New Data on the Goodall Focus.

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2. The John L. Cotter Award for Excellence in National Park Service Archeology

PREFACE: In honor of the long and distinguished career of Dr. John L. Cotter and his pioneering contributions to professional archeology within the National Park System, this annual award was established to inspire student and professional archeologists to continue Dr. Cotter's model of excellence.

PURPOSE: To recognize a specific archeological project within a unit of the National Park System, conducted by National Park Service staff, cooperator, permittee, or consultant, and guided by senior National Park Service staff archeologist(s), each fiscal year, which meets or exceeds the criteria below.

AWARD: The selected project lead person(s) will receive a commemorative non-monetary award and a certificate bearing name(s) of principal investigator(s), project dates, and field unit name. Presentation of the award shall be at a suitable gathering of representative NPS archeological staff, and a brief project description shall be announced through official NPS public affairs channels.

CRITERIA: Candidate project leaders and their work within park submerged or terrestrial sites shall be evaluated for eligibility with respect to the following elements:

- (1) Exemplary interdisciplinary research design that includes multiple testable inquiries (e.g., cultural patterns, affiliations, cultural change, or other analytical concepts of anthropology) as objectives, and uses data from other supporting disciplines;
- (2) Involvement of several students in training for academic work who perform work elements that contribute significantly to project goals;
- (3) Thorough scientific analysis, curatorial treatment meeting federal standards, interpretation of material culture that is integrated with research design inquiries, and utilization of appropriate specialists' assistance in these activities;
- (4) Stated program(s) to enhance public education regarding research results and benefits of new knowledge generated for improved local awareness as well as increase scientific values;
- (5) Publication plans with identified funding for printing of project results as professional reports, including electronic formats.

PROJECT TYPES: Eligible projects may be a phase of a larger multi-year program or a single year project which addresses prehistoric or historic archeological resources through: excavation, or survey and inventory, or testing, or focused symposia, or collection analysis and description, or combinations of these activities. If not NPS funded, the project must contribute to a field unit's strategic management of its archeological resources.

NOMINATION: An ongoing project or one begun in the preceding year and its supervisory staff may be nominated by an NPS career employee or non-NPS professional archeologist familiar with the work, other than the Review Group members or persons otherwise directly involved, during the fourth quarter of a fiscal year. Nominations addressing the criteria above should be less than 10 pages with fewer than 5 photographs or other illustrations. The nominator must forward 6 copies labeled "Cotter Award Nomination" by October 1 with a dated transmittal letter to the Office of the Department of the Interior Consulting Archeologist, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

REVIEW OF NOMINATIONS: At least six NPS supervisory archeologists will be requested by the Consulting Archeologist to review nominations and place them in rank order with a recommendation for award. This Review Group may seek input from previous awardees or non-NPS archeological experts. A consensus decision is needed. The Consulting Archeologist's Office will be informed of the award recommendation within two months of receipt of nominations. The Review Group will schedule a suitable presentation event. Nonselected nominations will be returned to the source individual after the award event. The Cotter Award was first presented on April 4, 2000, at the Annual Meeting of National Park Service Archeologists held in Philadelphia in conjunction with the Society for American Archaeology conference. The recipient, Joseph Labadie, was cited for his multi-year fieldwork at Amistad National Recreation Area, Texas, which involved many students and avocational volunteers.

3. News and Announcements

New to Chillicothe

Due to the delay in getting this issue of Hopewell Archeology in print, we have been slow to welcome Jennifer Pederson to the National Park Service. Jennifer is the National Park Archeologist at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Chillicothe.

Jennifer graduated from high school in suburban Atlanta, Georgia, and studied anthropology at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, and graduated with a B.A. in 1993. Jennifer began graduate school as a Dean's Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Ohio State University in the autumn of 1994. She received her M.A. in Anthropology with a focus in archeology in 1996 and is currently a Ph.D. candidate.

Her dissertation topic examines the factors affecting the location of nucleated agricultural communities in central Ohio. Since joining the National Park Service in January 1999, Jennifer has been busy becoming familiar with National Park Service procedures and resource management issues at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. Jennifer plans to conduct research at the Hopewell site during the summer of 2000.

More Changes at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park Superintendent John Neal has accepted a new position as Superintendent, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. He will be stationed in Bayfield, Wisconsin. John served as Superintendent at Hopewell Culture for seven years. Under his leadership, the park experienced major expansion with the addition of the Hopewell site and significant expansion of the boundaries at Hopeton. He also led the planning for eventual purchase of portions of the High Banks and Seip Works. John remains a strong supporter of archeology, and we wish him well in his new position.

Update on Hopeton Earthworks Research

In July 1998, the Midwest Archeological Center and Hopewell Culture National Historical Park collaborated on field investigations at the Hopeton Earthworks site. The project was a continuation of research in an area known as the Triangle site, which is located to the southwest of the circle and square on the edge of the alluvial terrace. The parallel walls, as mapped by Squier and Davis, originate at the point where the circle and square join, and they run southwest across the Triangle site and end at the terrace edge.

The purpose of the 1998 research was twofold: study the nature of prehistoric activities in this area of the Hopeton Earthworks, and evaluate the utility of using geophysical instruments to direct strategic test excavations at Hopeton and similar earthwork sites in this area. The 1998 investigations were conducted with assistance from students of the Milton Hershey School, Hershey, Pennsylvania, and volunteers from Chillicothe and Columbus, Ohio, and Nashville, Tennessee.

Prior to the start of the 1998 fieldwork, a large part (9,600 square meters) of the Triangle site was mapped using an RM-15 resistance meter, a Geometrics G858 cesium magnetometer, and a Geoscan FM36 fluxgate gradiometer. In this study, the cesium magnetometer proved to be the most effective in identifying small anomalies. While the resistance meter was less useful in identifying small anomalies, it did produce data that may reflect the remains of one of the parallel walls. A linear anomaly identified with the RM-15 appears to correspond in location and orientation to the southern of the two parallel walls as mapped by Squier and Davis.

The combination of the three geophysical survey instruments produced evidence of a large number of anomalies that might represent prehistoric features. The 1998 fieldwork was designed to investigate a number of these anomalies to evaluate the utility of the geophysical survey and to learn more about the prehistoric activities associated with the Hopeton Earthworks.

During more than two weeks of fieldwork, the research team investigated dozens of potential magnetic or soil resistance anomalies. Anomalies were investigated through excavation of five test units located over specific anomalies, and through plowzone stripping of two larger areas (Blocks A and B). Block A was 14 x 16 m, and Block B was 20 x 20 m.

In these two larger excavation units, each soil stain visible at the base of the plowzone was carefully mapped, recorded, and evaluated. Most features were small, subtle, and indicative of short-term use or limited activities.

Features included post holes, pits, and a prepared clay basin. Most of these features appear to be associated with Middle Woodland period activities at the Hopeton Earthworks, but more recent features associated with the Late Woodland period are also present. Flotation samples from the features have been processed, and laboratory analyses of bone, macro-botanical remains, and lithics are underway.

One of the pit features produced a moderately large piece of mica. The mica is roughly oval-shaped, and it is approximately 16 cm long and 8 cm wide. The mica was cleaned, treated, and examined by the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center in Omaha, Nebraska. Examination of the object included visual examination using a binocular microscope, photomacrographs, and preparation of measured drawings. Careful examination of the mica indicates that at least some of

the edges have been cut. Comparison of these edges with photos of cut-mica objects in the collections at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park confirm this interpretation.

Analysis of materials from the Hopeton Earthworks is ongoing. The Midwest Archeological Center hopes to prepare a report of this research in 2001.

Mounds and Geophysics

Mark R. Schurr, University of Notre Dame, has prepared a report on his geophysical investigation of the Middle Woodland mounds in northwest Indiana. The report describes Schurr's research at well-known sites such as Goodall and Bellinger, and it also provides valuable information about less well known sites such as Weise Mound (12 Pr 35), Williams Mound (12 Sj 330), and the Mud Lake site (12 Le 14). The report was prepared for the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and is titled "Geophysical Surveys of Middle Woodland Mounds in Northwest Indiana." It is a valuable reference for anyone with an interest in geophysics or northwest Indiana archeology.

4. Meeting Calendar

Perspective on Middle Woodland at the Millennium
Center for American Archaeology, Kampsville, Illinois, July 19–21, 2000.
Contact Jodi O’Gorman (618) 653-4316.

2000 Southeastern Archaeological Conference
The Crown Plaza Hotel, Macon, Georgia. November 8–11, 2000,
Contact Adam King, Savannah River Archaeological Research Program, email: aking@sc.edu.

Joint Meeting of the Midwest Archeological Conference and Plains Anthropological Conference
Radisson Hotel, St. Paul, Minnesota, November 9–12, 2000.
Contact Mark Dudzik (612) 725-2411.

66th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology
April 18–22, 2001, New Orleans Marriott and Le Meridien Hotels.
Contact Tobi Brimsek (202) 789- 8200.

5. Front Yard Archeology: Hopewellian Occupation at the Szalay Site by Jeffrey J. Richner and William J. Volf

The Szalay site was recorded and evaluated by Midwest Archeological Center teams at Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area during fieldwork in support of ongoing historic structure restoration efforts in Everett Village, Summit County, Ohio. The site is in the front yard of the historic Szalay House at Lock 27 of the Ohio and Erie Canal near the confluence of the Cuyahoga River and Furnace Run. The site was discovered during a shovel test inventory of a proposed leachfield that would serve the nearby Szalay and Osborne Houses.

Shovel testing and limited test excavations in 1997 yielded a small but intriguing prehistoric assemblage that included 10 fragmentary bladelets and a few cord-marked sherds. No features were encountered in 1997, and the site did not appear to be highly significant. However, the rarity of bladelets in the park area suggested that more intensive test excavations should be conducted.

Work in 1998 revealed that the site contained many features, all of which appear to be Middle Woodland. Several fragmentary pottery vessels, a few broken notched projectile points, mica fragments, and bladelets were recovered within or in direct association with the site's Middle Woodland features. The 22 site features excavated in 1998 include a large roasting oven, 16 post molds, and 4 shallow basins partially filled with fire-cracked rock (FCR).

A small amount of mica was recovered from the fill above the roasting oven, which contained much FCR lining the flat-bottomed feature. Numerous pieces of charcoal sufficient to fill half a grocery-sized bag occurred under the FCR. A thin, burned lens of clay marked the base of the feature.

The post molds average about 17 cm in diameter and extend from about 28 to 70 cm below surface. They are oriented vertically and are of highly regular form. Several contain pottery sherds occasionally oriented in flat "stacks." The great consistency of post mold size and position combined with the presence of sherds from individual vessels in multiple features strongly suggests that the features are contemporaneous with each other.

It appears that the posts formerly positioned in the features were removed; then fill was purposefully placed in the features — the fill often contained pottery sherds, FCR, flecks of mica, and small amounts of charcoal. Finally, the features were carefully covered with FCR or smooth, flat sandstone rocks. These rocks occur in distinct clusters and appear to seal the tops of the features.

A thin living surface containing a few pottery sherds and other artifacts was recorded amidst the cluster of post mold and basin features. Limited test excavations were conducted near the roasting oven, which is located about 17 m from the main cluster of features. In 1999 a fluxgate gradiometer inventory covering 120 m² was conducted. A few anomalies were identified, and one was evaluated. Limited test excavation at the anomaly revealed a flat-bottomed pit filled with FCR, pottery sherds, numerous small, calcined animal bones, several pitted stones (including a very large one with multiple pits), charcoal, and fragments of burned clay. Seeds and charred nut hulls are also present. A most unusual item is a fragmentary burned clay nest from a mud dauber or similar wasp species.

Middle Woodland artifacts recovered from the site to date include many pieces of FCR, about 50 bladelet fragments, a single complete bladelet, 3 fragmentary corner-notched projectile points, 3 pitted stones, 500 pieces of debitage, 450 sherds from a minimum of 9 individual vessels, a small quantity of mica, calcined bone, and charred floral and wood fragments.

Nearly all of the bladelets are made on lustrous, high-quality Flint Ridge flint. The ceramic vessels are all undecorated with cord-marked exteriors and flat to rounded lips. The faunal and macro-botanical elements will be analyzed later in 2000.

Radiocarbon dates from the Szalay site, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Ohio, suggesting Middle Woodland period activity.		
Lab Number	Measured C-14 Age	Provenience
Beta-122443	1800 ± 60 BP	Feature 6, post mold
Beta-122444	1850 ± 60 BP	Feature 13, post mold
Beta-122445	1740 ± 60 BP	Feature 4, post mold
Beta-122446	1700 ± 60 BP	Feature 5, roasting oven
Beta-122447	1660 ± 60 BP	Feature 5, roasting oven
Beta-122448	1680 ± 60 BP	Feature 5, roasting oven

Assignment of the site's features and artifacts to the Middle Woodland period is supported by six radiocarbon dates, all taken from undisturbed features. These radiocarbon dates are listed in the table at the bottom of the page. Among the topics under study is the relationship of this site to a nearby Hopewellian ceremonial locus, the Everett Knoll (33 Su 14), which was discovered by workmen building a school in 1856 and later tested by staff from Case Western Reserve University (Brose 1974). Currently, park staff members are carefully reviewing all available options for leach field installation, and it is hoped that the outcome will be the preservation of the remaining portions of this small but very significant site.

Reference

Brose, David S. 1974
 The Everett Knoll: A Late Hopewellian Site in Northeastern Ohio.
 The Ohio Journal of Science 74(1):36-46.

About the Authors. Jeffery Richner is an Archeologist at the Midwest Archeological Center and specializes in the archeology of the Midwest. William Volf is an Archeological Technician at the Center and is also a student at the University of Nebraska majoring in anthropology with specialization in archeology. undisturbed site features.